



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## RAPID CITY GUARD UNIT RETURNS HOME FROM MIDDLE EAST

More than 90 soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment have arrived home to South Dakota after completing overseas duty in the Middle East.

The Rapid City-based unit returned after a nearly year-long deployment where they provided aerial medical evacuation support with HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters to U.S. military and coalition forces in the region.

"This unit exceeded all expectations throughout their deployment," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "We are so thankful for their safe return to South Dakota."

The soldiers returned stateside to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete demobilization requirements before to returning back to South Dakota.

A welcome home ceremony for the unit is being planned for early November. Details for the ceremony will be released once confirmed.



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# JANZEN RECOGNIZED FOR HIS OUTSTANDING SERVICE



Last week, during the Sea of Goodwill's 5th annual Veterans/First Responders appreciation day, Codington County VSO Al Janzen was recognized for his outstanding support for veterans.

Janzen was also named "Veteran of the Year" by the Codington County Veterans Council.

Congratulations Al, and thanks for all you do for our veterans.

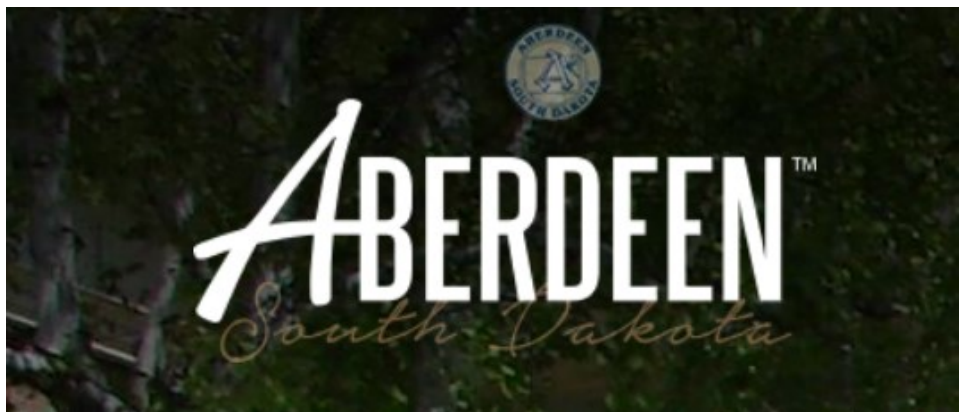


# SITE SELECTED FOR NEW VA CLINIC IN ABERDEEN

The Sioux Falls Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System has awarded a lease for a new larger site for the VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Aberdeen, SD. Plans will now begin for the contractor, Construction Managers of Goldsboro, Inc., to build the new clinic at 909 S. Lamont Street behind Target in Aberdeen.

The current Aberdeen CBOC has 8,141 sq. feet; and the new clinic will add nearly 2,000 sq. feet for primary care, expanded mental health and telehealth services.

Since the VA outpatient clinic opened with contracted staff in 2001, it has continued to grow with support from Aberdeen area veterans and surrounding communities. During FY 2017, over 2,500 veterans received health care there.



# SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN OUTREACH EVENTS

SDDVA's Erin Bultje, Erin Brown, Brett Dickerson, Joe Leasure, Katherine Richardson, Shannon Phillips, and Michelle Henderson, staffed SDDVA's booth at the Veterans Stand Down in Sioux Falls last Friday.

Deputy Secretary Pollard also took time out of his busy schedule to visit with veterans at the Stand Down.

Veterans were briefed on benefits, services and programs.

Stand Downs are a grassroots, community-based intervention program designed to help veterans. They are provided access to the community resources needed to begin addressing their individual problems and rebuilding their lives.

SDDVA's Jeri Smith set up a booth this week at Pierre's Project Connect. Sheila Carpenter and Charles Quinn, Hughes/Sully/Stanley County CVSO, partnered with SDDVA on the booth. This one-stop program provided attendees with employment assistance, housing assistance, economic assistance, haircuts, family portraits, dental screenings, state services, veterans benefits and a hot meal.



Numerous state, federal and local agencies and local businesses participated in this great event.

Smith serves as SDDVA's representative on the SD Housing for the Homeless Consortium.

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# 3-D PRINTED ARTIFICIAL LUNG

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) scientists at the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System in Michigan recently announced that they are working to create a 3D-printed artificial lung that could potentially revolutionize treatment of Veterans affected by lung disease.

Though still in its infancy, VA researchers hope to build what they call the first artificial lung that closely replicates the natural lung, resulting in compatibility with living cells and a very small size for portable or wearable short- and long-term respiratory support.

In the near term, the device could be used as a temporary measure — a bridge to help patients waiting lung transplant or an aid for Veterans with recovering lungs. According to researchers, future versions could have longer-term applications.

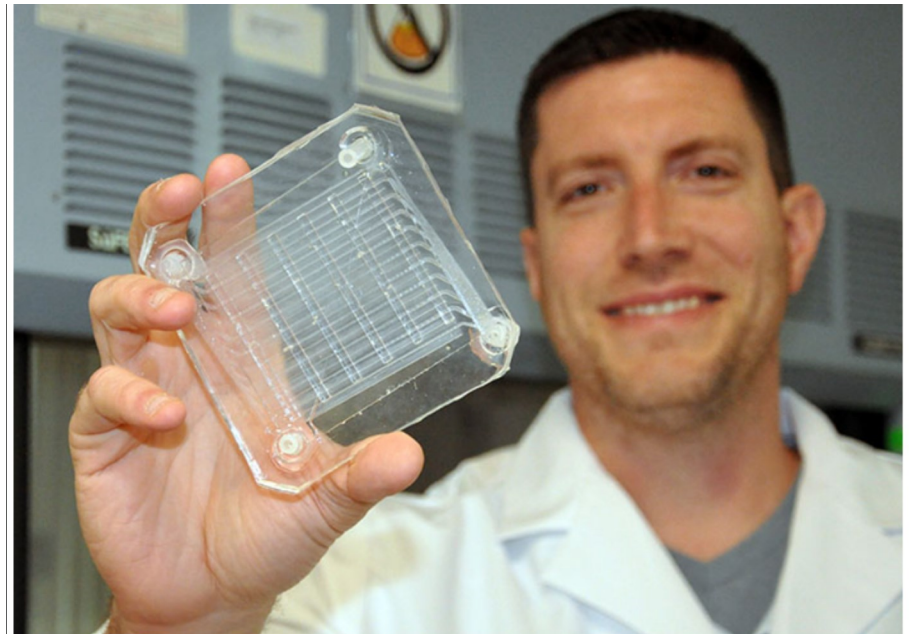
“Our veterans deserve the highest quality of care and the latest breakthroughs in medical science,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This exciting project is the latest in a long string of incredible research and medical advancements developed by VA researchers over the years. The results of this project could change millions of lives for the better.”

Exposure to burn pits, sand, diesel exhaust and chemicals are some of the most commonly cited factors that lead to lung problems for active-duty military. About 20 percent of patients with severe traumatic brain injury also have acute lung injury.

One lung disorder VA researchers hope to tackle someday with the 3D-printed artificial lung is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), regarded as one of the most prevalent and costliest ailments in the Veteran population.

COPD affects 5 percent of American adults and 16 percent of the Veteran population. Most people with COPD have emphysema, in which the air sacs of the lung are damaged and enlarged, and chronic bronchitis, a long-lasting cough caused by chronic inflammation of the bronchial tubes. The disease is characterized by an airflow limitation that is often linked to an abnormal response of the lungs to noxious particles or gases, such as those in cigarette smoke.

For additional information about this study visit <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0818-Researchers-strive-to-make-3D-printed-artificial-lung-to-help-Vets-with-respiratory-disease.cfm>.



# MILITARY HONORS CEREMONY FOR UNACCOMPANIED VETERANS


The Black Hills National Cemetery will host its quarterly Military Honors Ceremony for Unaccompanied Veterans Monday, October 1, 2018, at 9:00 am (MT).

This ceremony provides Military Funeral Honors to those veterans interred at the cemetery over the previous quarter, who did not have honors at the time of burial. The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) and Army National Guard will be performing honors.

Services will be held at the BHNC Committal Shelter (at the main flag pole) 29901 Pleasant Valley Drive.

## SCLD FOUNDATION GALA

The Sergeant Colton Levi Derr Foundation (SCLDF) announces their annual Gala fundraiser to support veterans. The event will be held on October 20, at The Rushmore Plaza Civic Center - LaCroix Hall, Rapid City, SD. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. and event ceremonies kick-off at 5:45 p.m. Tickets are \$35 and must be purchased in advance. Business evening attire is recommended, but not required.



★★★ SERGEANT COLTON LEVI DERR ★★★  
**FOUNDATION**  
*Gallantly Forward 2018 Gala*

**SAT  
OCT  
20<sup>TH</sup>**  
★★★  
*Tickets*  
**\$35**  
BUY FOR  
VETERANS IF YOU  
CAN'T ATTEND!

**RUSHMORE  
PLAZA CIVIC  
CENTER  
LACROIX  
HALL**  
★★★  
*Doors at  
5 pm*

**SOCIAL ★ DINNER ★ LIVE MUSIC ★ SILENT & LIVE AUCTION  
GUEST SPEAKERS ★ BATTLE BUDDY AWARD**

SGT Derr battled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)  
following his combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.  
We honor Colton by helping his fellow veterans.  
*The battle does not end when the war is over.*

Get your ticket TO ★ Call OR Go Online 605.545.2505  
SUPPORT our heroes SERGEANTDERRFOUNDATION.ORG f

# VA RELEASES NATIONAL SUICIDE DATA REPORT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released national and state-level findings from its most recent analysis of veteran suicide data, from 2005 to 2016. The analysis is part of the VA's ongoing examination of non-veteran and veteran death records that is being used to evaluate and improve the VA's Suicide Prevention Program.

"Suicide prevention remains the VA's highest clinical priority. One life lost to suicide is one too many," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

The report yields several important insights:

- From 2015 to 2016, the overall current and former service member suicide count decreased from 7,663 to 7,298 deaths (decrease of 365).
- From 2015 to 2016, the veteran specific suicide count decreased from 6,281 to 6,079 deaths (decrease of 202).
- From 2015 to 2016, the veteran unadjusted suicide rate decreased from 30.5/100,000 to 30.1/100,000.
- Overall, the fact remains that on average about 20 current or former service members die each day, six have been in VA health care and 14 were not.
- Rates of suicide were highest among younger veterans (ages 18-34) and lowest among older Veterans (ages 55 and older). However, because the older veteran population is the largest, this group accounted for 58.1 percent of veteran suicide deaths in 2016.
- The rate of suicide among 18-34-year-old veterans continues to increase.
- The use of firearms as a method of suicide remains high. The percentage of suicide deaths that involved firearms was 67.0 percent in 2015 and 69.4 percent in 2016.
- Information regarding deaths among current service members is not included.



The 2016 VA National Suicide Data Report follows a new format, designed to be easier to understand and consume. This report does not highlight the average number of suicides per day, a measure that is commonly misinterpreted as a rate. Unlike a rate, the count per day does not account for changes in population size. VA's goal is to present complex suicide data in the most actionable format and to convey the key findings in the clearest terms. The "VA National Suicide Data Report 2005–2016," and the accompanying state data sheets are available at: [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Data.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Data.asp)

"Data are an integral part of our public health approach to suicide prevention," Wilkie said. "These data offer insights that will help us build networks of support, interventions and research-backed suicide prevention initiatives to reach all Veterans, even those who do not and may never come to us for care."



## VA SUICIDE DATA (CONTINUED)

The VA is committed to ensuring that all veterans receive the support they need, and it is working diligently to improve services every day. The VA has undertaken substantial veteran suicide prevention efforts in recent years by:

- Developing the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#) to guide VA personnel and stakeholders — including other federal agencies, state and local governments, health care systems, and community organizations — so that we, as a nation, can reduce suicide rates among *all* veterans.
- [Implementing the Mayor's Challenge](#) to empower cities nationwide to build coalitions to prevent veteran suicide.
- For more information on the VA suicide prevention efforts, refer to the “VA’s Efforts to Prevent Veteran Suicide: September 2018” fact sheet at [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Data.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/Suicide-Prevention-Data.asp) and visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention).

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential crisis intervention and support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1; send a text message to 838255 or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).

## VA MARKS GOLD STAR FAMILIES REMEMBRANCE WEEK

This week, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is commemorating Gold Star Families Remembrance Week, designated to honor families affected by the loss of a service member who died while serving in the U.S. armed forces.

Beginning this week (Sept. 23-29) and over the coming months, commemoration plaques to pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives and the families they left behind are being placed at VA national cemeteries across the country.

Visitors to national cemeteries and other VA facilities may find other tributes to Gold Star Families, such as the recently dedicated Gold Star Families Memorial Monument at the Louis Stokes VA Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, and one at Washington Crossing National Cemetery in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

The term Gold Star Family references the service flag, first flown by families during World War I. The flag included a blue star for every immediate family member serving in the U.S. armed forces. If that loved one died, the blue star was replaced by a gold star. The U.S. began observing Gold Star Mother’s Day on the last Sunday of September in 1936.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 5-7—VFW Council of Administration—Cedar Shores Resort—Oacoma  
 Oct 6—VFW State Commander/Aux. President Homecoming—Cedar Shores Resort—Oacoma  
 Oct 8—Native American Heritage Day (state offices closed)  
 Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa Grille—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)  
 Oct 12-13—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Dept. Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street) - Sioux Falls  
 Oct 19—Open House new Spirit Lake CBOC—3:00 pm (CT)  
 Oct 23—SD Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters (209 N. Garfield Ave.—Sioux Falls) - 10:00 am (CT)  
 Nov 11—Veterans Day Community Program—Lincoln High School—Sioux Falls—10:30 am (CT)  
 Nov 11—Veterans Day Last Call Ceremony—SFVAHCS—1:30 pm (CT)  
 Nov 12—State Offices Closed  
 Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)  
 Nov 16—Dakota Dunes CBOC Open House—2:00 pm (CT)  
 Dec 4—Governor’s Budget Address—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)  
 Jan 8—Governor’s State of the State—State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)  
 Jan 13-18—VFW Accredited Service Officer Training—Annapolis, MD  
 Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference  
 July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL



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